

**Morris K. Udall -- Selected Articles:**

## **Mo Udall: Long Shot** **by Aaron Latham**

**Copyright 1974 by *New York Magazine*.** Reprinted with permission from *New York Magazine*, December 1974, pp. 82.

I was not sure that I should go through with it. My editor wanted me to play basketball against Morris Udall, a man who might conceivably be the next president of the United States. On the one hand, I told myself that James Reston would never do such a thing. Which did not make me feel too good. On the other hand, I told myself that Richard Nixon would never have done such a thing either. Which made me feel better, because at least it showed that Udall did not take himself too seriously. Any man who was willing to step onto a basketball court with a reporter was not likely later to confuse the White House with another kind of court, the kind "King Richard" used to run.

At 7:30 one morning, Udall and I trooped down to the House gym to play a short game. The congressman had been a basketball star in college and even played a year of pro ball. He also had a height advantage. More reasons why I was not sure I should be playing him.

Besides demonstrating that Udall has a good sense of humor, the game also showed that he has a good outside shot and a good fake. It seemed appropriate that Udall should be good from the outside, because that is how he has played everything all his life, challenging the fraternity system at the University of Arizona, attacking the seniority system in the House, and now bucking the monopoly which senators and governors have had on the White House lately.

Again and again, Udall would fake me out of position, laugh at me, and then sink a bucket. In politics, he is similarly elusive. At first, he seems like a harmless funnyman, but actually he is very serious about his work, if not himself, and not all that benign. His humor can become a weapon. In Oregon, he ridiculed one M.C. whom he called a "massacre of ceremonies," finally concluding by dubbing him the stupidest man in the Western World.

We called off our game before a winner was determined because I wasn't supposed to be in the House's members-only gym. We were afraid some Old Bull like Wilbur Mills might catch us and be shocked at our playing so fast and loose. -- **A.L.**

Last update: June 3, 1996.

URL: <http://dizzy.library.arizona.edu/branches/spc/udall/presidn2.pdf>